

I moved to Columbus in 1984 at the age of fifteen. I was raised in a New Jersey suburb, but very much in the shadow of the biggest of big cities. Since arriving and settling here, I have seen our city grow and evolve in many ways.

I feel fortunate to be able to raise my family of two girls, ages 15 and 12, and one boy, age 10, here, together with my wife who was born and raised here. I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to have worked in downtown Columbus, as part of the legal profession, for over twenty years.

On its best days, Columbus is, to me, a place that is small enough to avoid the detriments often associated with a big city, yet big enough to enjoy the benefits associated with a big city. There is a professional and modern aspect to our city. It continues an upward trajectory which attracts people to both visit and stay.

One of the crown jewels of our modern growth, in my opinion, is the Arena District. It is busy; it is bustling; it is vibrant. There is a life and an energy within the District which attracts: people, businesses, events.

In my time downtown, I observed a shift in the city's "center"; that unofficial center became located more squarely in the Arena District than anywhere else. Businesses and firms relocated there. Restaurants, pubs, hotels, and other centers of social activity became entrenched there. And, marque events followed: NCAA tournaments, concerts, holiday shows, professional sports, All-Star competitions – with all the excitement and all the revenue that such things generate. The Arena District has become one of *the* places to be in Columbus.

At the heart of it all, of course, is the Arena itself. Nationwide Arena is the hub around which all these positive experiences orbit.

The Arena exists first and foremost to house Columbus' NHL-member professional hockey team, the Blue Jackets. And while I love Ohio State and the Buckeyes, as well as the Columbus Clippers, the Crew, and each of the other local sports teams for which we cheer, having the addition of a team from one of America's four major professional sports leagues has not only been a blessing, it has propelled our ascent and improved our image as a "major" player in a national sports context. It is part of our identity. This should be valued, and efforts should be made to maintain such a position.

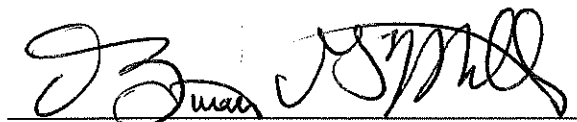
While sports are far from the most important matter in society, the reality is that they are thoroughly and passionately enjoyed by millions. Sporting contests provide a draw for society and they provide a common ground over which we may converge together and unite. This – uniting – is something that should be strongly promoted at all times, but especially today. Nationwide Arena, and the Arena District as a whole, provide such an opportunity for our citizens and our visitors.

Having facilities which continue to receive the respect of those citizens and visitors alike – the type of respect that has garnered the Arena recognitions as one of the very top stadium/arena experiences in the country from ESPN and other national commentaries - is key to maintaining the health of the District. The health of the District in turn, promotes the health and the perception of the city.

For all of these reasons I support the ticket fee proposal currently being recommended by the Greater Columbus Arts Council. Our city deserves not just to have a professional arena and surrounding district; we deserve to have one that is maintained on such a level as for our city to be viewed as having one of the best such arenas and districts. Having the best will attract the best. This will allow our citizens to enjoy the best, and it will allow us to maintain our ascent as a city.

Having the best, however, requires public support. It requires re-investment in the asset we have. It requires financing to help maintain and improve this asset. The current proposal envisions a fair way of ensuring such maintenance and improvement: the use of funds derived from those who already utilize the Arena. Only the fees generated by Arena events will be put toward Arena improvements. Remaining amounts will benefit the arts. The modest ticket fee will provide a steady, stable, and predictable revenue stream which will allow the Arena to serve our community for years to come. Failing to provide such stability risks the integrity and the quality of the Arena, the District, and the experience enjoyed at both. This, in turn, presents risks to our city's health and stature as a whole moving forward.

I hope that such a constructive plan can be utilized to protect and fortify this crown jewel of our city, so that my wife, my friends, and most especially, my children and those that follow them, can enjoy the benefits of the Arena District and all of the special events that it hosts. I wish for them to have a city with a future even brighter than that which we have now.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian G. Miller", written over a horizontal line.

Brian G. Miller  
Worthington, Ohio